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**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
MARCH 16, 2009**

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 1121, An Act Concerning Mental Health Parity and the Administration of the Charter Oak Health Plan.

This proposal requires the Charter Oak Health Plan to provide insurance coverage for mental health services in the same manner as the state currently requires for private health insurance.

I have consistently and relentlessly fought for equal insurance coverage for mental illness as for physical illness. Connecticut has one of the strongest mental health parity laws in the nation, requiring private health insurance policies to cover medically necessary mental health services. The Healthcare Advocate and I aided Senator Christopher Dodd successfully fighting for a federal mental health parity law for all health insurance plans covered under ERISA. Importantly, federal law does not preempt state mental health insurance requirements that are more generous.

With Connecticut's proud history of protecting individuals with mental illnesses, we should be shocked and ashamed that our signature health plan for the uninsured fails to provide for mental health parity. Senate Bill 1121 would restore fairness to the Charter Oak Health Plan.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 1121.